



Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography

Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography (HCNSO)

Directions for the Thesis Track Student

This publication is designed to help students through the various stages of their master’s degree. For full requirements, please consult the Catalog at <http://www.nova.edu/ocean/academics/course-catalog/index.html>

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NSU HCNSO Guidelines to the Thesis Student

1. Definition of the Thesis paper

A thesis is an original contribution to knowledge resulting from the systematic study of a significant problem or issue. The following is an outline of the various sections of a traditional, quantitative thesis. The format is presented only as a guide. For more in depth information, consult your major professor. The thesis should contain the following sections:

- Title page (see end of handbook for standard form)
- Approval page (see end of handbook)
- Abstract
- Acknowledgments
- Preface (optional)
- Table of Contents - (detailed; this serves as the outline and section headers as well)
- Body of Thesis
 1. Introduction
 2. Statement of Purpose or Objectives
 3. Methods and Materials
 4. Results
 5. Discussion
 6. Summary and Conclusions
 7. References
 8. Appendices (optional)

2. Course Schedule – What to take for courses

a. Timelines (Single and Joint Majors)

All majors are required to take five core classes:

- Biostatistics (I or II)
- Marine Chemistry
- Marine Ecosystems
- Marine Geology
- Concepts of Physical Oceanography

i. Single Major Thesis

Single major students, those taking either marine biology, coastal zone management, OR marine environmental sciences must have the following course requirements (39 Credits):

- 5 Core Courses
- 5 Elective Courses (major dependent - OCMB, CZMT, or MEVS)¹
- Directed Independent Study (DIS) for developing proposal
- 9 Thesis Credits (minimum)

¹ Students are allowed to take 2 courses outside of their major focus. For example, a marine biology major can take two CZM courses as part of their 8 electives.

The following is a recommended timeline for the single major thesis student:²

YEAR 1

Session	1	2	3	4	5
	Core 1 Elective 1	Elective 2	Core 2	Elective 3	Core 3 Elective 4
	SELECT PROFESSOR/ ADVISOR		LIBRARY SEARCH & PROPOSAL		

YEAR 2

Session	1	2	3	4	5
	Core 4 RESEARCH (16 weeks)		Core 5 RESEARCH (16 weeks)	Elective 5	RESEARCH

ii. Joint Major Thesis

Joint major students, those taking a two of the three majors (marine biology, coastal zone management, or marine environmental sciences) must have the following course requirements (51 Credits):

1. 5 Core Courses
2. 9 Elective Courses (chosen from 2 of the 3 specialties)
3. Directed Independent Study (DIS) for developing proposal
4. 9 Thesis Credits (minimum)

The following is a recommended timeline for the joint major thesis student:³

YEAR 1

Session	1	2	3	4	5
	Core 1 Elective 1	Elective 2	Core 2 Elective 3	Elective 4	Core 3 Elective 5
	SELECT PROFESSOR/ ADVISOR		LIBRARY SEARCH & PROPOSAL		

YEAR 2

Session	1	2	3	4	5
	Core 4 Elective 6	Elective 7	Core 5		Elective 8
	RESEARCH (16 weeks)		RESEARCH (16 weeks)		RESEARCH

2. Selecting a Major Professor

The selection of a major professor should take place within the first two terms of coursework. The explicit procedure is that the student approaches a potential major professor, discusses potential research projects, and obtains agreement for consideration of the student’s proposal. The potential major professor

² It should be noted that students with busy day jobs may opt to move through the program at a more relaxed pace. Note, to be eligible for federal financial aid, a student must be registered for one 3 credit course each session. International students must register for a minimum of 2 courses or 1 thesis course each session.

³ Footnotes 1 & 2 also apply to the joint thesis major.

may form a provisional committee that includes at least one other center faculty member. Proposal drafts will be reviewed by the major professor and committee. If this process is anticipated to take more than several weeks, the student must be registered for three directed independent study credits during the process.

3. Choosing a committee

The thesis advisory committee will consist of a major professor from the Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography (HCNSO) faculty and at least two additional members, one of whom may be from another center of Nova Southeastern University or from outside the university. The committee participates in topic selection and preparation of the proposal/outline and thesis. The major professor must have a terminal degree in the area being researched. All committee members should have the terminal degree. In exceptional circumstances, experience can substitute for the terminal degree for one of the committee members (not the major). Close coordination between student and committee during this process is strongly advised.

4. Writing the Proposal

The proposal must consist of the following elements:

- Title of the proposed thesis
- Statement of the problem, hypothesis to be tested, or topic to be reviewed
- Statement of the significance of the work
- A detailed outline of the topic to be studied, the hypothesis to be tested and a preliminary literature review
- A detailed discussion of the methodology and source of funding for the project
- A list of scientific journals appropriate for publishing the proposed research
- References/Bibliography (Literature cited)

Develop the topic.

The student should develop the idea, discuss with faculty and major professor, or investigate a new aspect of an existing research program. The major professor is a source of ideas, help, and direction, but the student must take the project beyond the conceptual stage.

Write the proposal.

Start in the library. The student should review the current literature to determine how the problem relates to previous work and to assess its feasibility and significance. For a literature review, the student should obtain an idea of the quantity of information available (breadth of topic) and any previous reviews of the subject. For the proposal, the review should be thorough but need not be fully and completely developed. Any proposal submitted without evidence of a literature search will be rejected out of hand. Any proposal with poor English, spelling, and format will be rejected out of hand. The proposal should be as well written and as complete as possible. It should not be submitted as a draft needing extensive editorial changes, but rather as the student's best effort toward a finished product.

Commencement of the MS thesis may begin only after the MS student has an approved proposal. Students not yet having approved thesis topics or proposals, but desiring to prepare them under guidance, should register for directed independent study credits under their major professors section of the appropriate course number (OCMB-0796, CZMT-0775, MEVS-5025; 4 cr.).

5. Acceptance of Proposal

The major professor and committee members will review a proposal draft. The student may meet and discuss issues with the professor and committee. The committee members make a final decision as to whether the proposal is defensible and sign a cover sheet (signature page) available on the website (<http://cnso.nova.edu/forms/approval-for-thesis-proposal.pdf>). The student must then submit a copy of the approved proposal and its signature page to the program office before registering for capstone credits. Once approved by the program office, thesis work may begin, directed by the major professor and committee.

6. Registering for Thesis Credits

Once the proposal is accepted by the committee and submitted to the program office, the student may register for thesis credits in the next session. Students must register under their major professor's section code. If the student does not know this, ask the program office.

Once a student starts registering for thesis credits, they cannot stop registering for credits until the thesis is completed and defended.

Students must register for at least three consecutive terms of thesis, for a minimum of 9 credits. The student should be ready to defend at this time. If the student's committee states that the thesis is not defensible, the student must register for Thesis credits until the committee is satisfied.⁴

7. Final Exam- The Assessment of Learning Outcomes (the Rubric Exam)

Prior to graduation all Masters' students must take a pass/fail test on the learning outcomes of their program (i.e. MB, CZM, MES, BS, MA). Students failing the test will be required to retake it prior to graduation; the test may be retaken multiple times. After finishing all coursework and prior to the oral defense of thesis or capstone the student will take a closed-book written test. Students may schedule the exam online at <http://nsuoc.wufoo.com/forms/rubric-schedule-request>. Once information is submitted the student will receive a confirmation email with a link to the calendar of available times for the rubric exam.

The questions will concern general knowledge and the scientific method (specifically, the material learned in all 5 CORE courses and 5 electives of the students choice) and will be directed at the learning outcomes of the individual courses.

8. Defending the Thesis

On completion of the Thesis paper to the major professor's satisfaction, it is formally submitted to the other committee members. Once the committee is satisfied the defensible copy must be submitted to the program office for final acceptance. This includes an electronic copy and a cover sheet signed by all committee members. This can be found at under Student Forms at the Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography's (HCNSO) website at: <http://cnso.nova.edu/forms/approval-for-thesis-defense.pdf>

For very long works, this time period must be extended to provide the faculty adequate time for reading. The defense is normally scheduled take place on a Friday afternoon, around 4pm.

⁴ Students intending to defend in the third session *must* allow for time for revisions and changes demanded by the committee. Most thesis require about two months of "fine-tuning". Do *not* expect to submit a draft to your committee and defend a few weeks later.

The thesis defense will be a public event. For the defense, requirements include a 30- to 50-minute oral presentation (with appropriate visual aids) to the faculty, student body, and other interested persons. The committee then will question the candidate in private on the thesis work and related aspects. This private session is closed and limited to the candidate, members of the committee, and interested faculty members. The committee then takes a vote in closed session. The thesis may be accepted, accepted with revision, or rejected.

The HCNSO faculty ultimately must pass on acceptability. The student should consult frequently with the committee during all phases of thesis work for continuity and in order to avoid problems during the formal defense. If the paper is not acceptable, the student receives the grade of "F" for the course. If the paper and defense are acceptable, the student receives a grade of "P". If the paper is acceptable, but requires only minor corrections, the student will receive a grade of "P" when the corrected paper is accepted.

All MS thesis defenses must be scheduled at least two weeks in advance through the Program Office. Notice will be provided to the faculty and student body. At least two weeks prior to scheduled thesis defense, a copy of the work must be submitted to and reside in the program office. This defensible copy must be complete, including, for example, all relevant materials, appendices, figures, and data tables. Figures and tables should be incorporated into the text. The copy (or reproductions thereof) will be available for review to any interested faculty member. The thesis must be considered at least 95% complete, or it will not be acceptable for defense. *If the defensible copy is not submitted in time, the defense will be rescheduled.* Once the defensible copy is submitted, additional revisions should not be made or circulated prior to the defense.⁵

9. Timeline

To recap: when preparing for a defense, the student must complete the following timeline:

- The student's committee must agree that the thesis is defensible (>95% complete)
- The student must coordinate a defense date between their committee and the program office
- A defensible copy of the thesis must be submitted to the Program Office not later than two weeks prior to the set defense date
- The student must present a 30 to 50 minute oral presentation, complete with visual aids for the committee, faculty, staff, students and other interested parties
- The student and committee meet in a closed session for the final section of the defense

10. The Final Chapter – how to finish and exit the program

All of this information can be found on the [Oceanography library guide](http://nova.campusguides.com/oclbindingguide):
<http://nova.campusguides.com/oclbindingguide>

a. Final Submission

At least three signed copies of the successfully defended thesis paper, including any revisions specified during the defense, must be submitted in correct form to the Oceanography librarian for binding. The cost of binding is the student's responsibility. An electronic copy is also required by the library. The *thesis must include an abstract as well as keywords* for literature searches. To avoid additional tuition, the final thesis must be submitted to the program office within four weeks of the oral defense. Thesis with major revisions after the oral defense will be required to register for an additional term.

⁵ A completed thesis must be logged into the graduate program office at least two weeks prior to the defense. This is to allow time for faculty to read the work before the defense.

b. Printing requirements

A left-hand margin of one-and-a-half inches is essential. Final copies of thesis with a left-hand margin less than one-and-a-half inches will be rejected. This is necessary to prevent loss of text during binding. All other margins should be one inch. Word processing should be neat and clean and laser-printed. Inkjet printing is unacceptable. Color images should be printed on the laser color printer. For the final copies, paper must be of good quality, 20 pound, 25 percent cotton (rag) bond (fine business paper).

One bound copy will be placed in the library, one is for the student's major professor, and one is for the program office. The student may submit any number of additional personal copies for binding. The student is responsible for the cost of the binding. One electronic copy is also required for the library.

c. Sample Cover and Approval Sheets

Students should follow the sample cover and approval sheets from the attached appendix (Appendix 1 and 2) or from the library or the program office. These approval sheets, or signature pages, must be on the same quality paper as the capstone. *All the copies submitted to the library, program office and major professor must have original signatures.*

d. Application for Degree/Conferral

Once the student has turned in the thesis for binding, they are ready to complete the degree. Please take a moment to review your name, address, and telephone number in WebSTAR to ensure that we have the correct information on file should we need to contact you in the future. Make any corrections to your address and telephone number while in WebSTAR.

While in WebSTAR, it is important that you also view your online transcript (i.e., degree, major, grades, etcetera). Should you find any discrepancies, please notify us immediately by sending an email to: missy@nsu.nova.edu

As part of this process, you should review your account to ensure there are not holds and/or outstanding balances. This will expedite the degree conferral process, and as such, facilitate smoother processing on your behalf.

Once everything is correct in WebStar, you need to submit your application for degree. Please go to <https://www.nova.edu/sbin/degreeapp/> and fill out the online form (see Appendix 4 for sample).

The last step in the degree application process is to remit payment (\$100). Once the information on the Degree Application Request form is completed and submitted online, there will be a link to go to for payment. No degree will be conferred until payment is received and all financial obligations have been met.

Once the online form is complete, a survey will be sent to the student via email. Students must return their Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography (HCNSO) keys. The student must also make sure all books have been returned to the library. Any incomplete items will result in a delay in conferment of the degree.

Once all of the above has been satisfied, the diploma will be conferred at the end of the month, and will be mailed to the student within 2 months.

Appendix 1. Sample Cover

HALMOS COLLEGE OF NATURAL SCIENCES AND OCEANOGRAPHY

TITLE

By

Name of Student

Submitted to the Faculty of
Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Science with a specialty in:

Your Major Here

Nova Southeastern University

Date

Appendix 2. Sample Signature Page

**Thesis of
*NAME***

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Science:

Insert Major here

INSERT NAME HERE
Nova Southeastern University
Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography

Month Year

Approved:

Thesis Committee

Major Professor : _____
*** *****, Ph.D.

Committee Member : _____
*** *****, Ph.D.

Committee Member : _____
**** *****, Ph.D.

**Appendix 3. Screen shot of application for degree
Degree/Diploma Application for: Your Name here**
Required fields marked with an asterisk(*).

Month/Year * in which you
will complete your degree
requirements:

Degree | Major:*

Minor:

Concentration:

2nd Major:

2nd Minor:

2nd Concentration:

Daytime Phone #:*

(Include Area/International Code)

In the space below, type your name EXACTLY as you want it to appear on your
diploma.*

(First, Middle, Last Name, Suffix)

NOTE: If your name contains a special character (for example, é,ü, etc) this system will
not accommodate the inclusion of them. As such, please send an email to us
(diplomas@nova.edu) indicating the special characters that should appear in your
name in addition to completing this application.

Please indicate the address where your diploma is to be mailed (NO P.O. Box)

Address Line 1:*

Address Line 2:

City:*

State:*(U.S.Addresses)

Province (Non U.S.addresses):

Country:

Zip/Postal Code:*

Phone #:

**Please verify that all information is accurate and correct prior to clicking the "Submit Request"
button.**